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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: BIR NABALA CHECKPOINT REMOVED; IMPROVES TRAVEL
BETWEEN NEARBY VILLAGES AND RAMALLAH

REF: A. JERUSALEM 565
[B](#). JERUSALEM 1488
[C](#). JERUSALEM 1508

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: ConGenoffs verified the complete removal of the Bir Nabala/Rafat Masyoun checkpoint south of Ramallah on August 22. The removal improves travel between Ramallah and its southern villages, where some 50,000 Palestinians reside. Local Palestinians said the previous wait time when leaving Ramallah was 30-45 minutes. UN OCHA sources called the removal "significant." Bir Nabala is the seventh West Bank roadblock or checkpoint removed since April. END SUMMARY.

Removal of Bir Nabala Checkpoint

[1](#)2. (C) ConGenoffs visited the Bir Nabala/Rafat Masyoun checkpoint south of Ramallah on August 22 and confirmed its complete removal. The checkpoint was located along a north-south road south of Ramallah, which crosses under but not connect to Route 443 between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. On August 22, concrete blocks and remnants of lanes and booths were on the roadside. There was no IDF presence at the site, and traffic flowed freely to the north and south.

[1](#)3. (C) Bir Nabala was a one-way checkpoint at which IDF soldiers checked vehicles exiting Ramallah (Area A) toward Area B and C villages in the two enclaves to the south and southwest. According to local Palestinians, northbound traffic into Ramallah was not generally stopped, but travelers heading southbound from Ramallah through the checkpoint would wait 30-45 minutes. Locals confirmed the checkpoint was removed August 21.

Significant Impact for Local Villagers

[1](#)4. (C) Removal of the checkpoint will significantly facilitate access to Ramallah for approximately 50,000 Palestinians in the two enclaves formed by the separation barrier south and southwest of Ramallah. One enclave directly south of Ramallah includes four villages (Bir Nabala, Al Judeira, Al Jib, and Beit Hanina al Balad), pop. 15,000. The four villages are bordered on the east and west by the separation barrier and to the south by impassable terrain (and the barrier,s proposed route).

[1](#)5. (C) A 1.1 kilometer sunken road/tunnel running underneath the barrier connects those villages to a second enclave to the west, bounded on the north and south by the completed barrier and on the east by barrier construction. Ten villages, pop. 35,000, make up this second enclave. OCHA sources told Econoff the removal was "significant," because it allows villagers south of Ramallah to drive unimpeded back

and forth to Ramallah without having a 45 minute wait at the checkpoint.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Bir Nabala is the seventh removal (or adjustment) of West Bank roadblocks and checkpoints since April. They are: Asira al Shamaliyah - 804 (north of Nablus, April 28), Beit Haarava - Dead Sea (West of Jericho, May 13), Rimonim (near Ramallah, May 31), Kvasim (south of Hebron, May 18), Farsh al-Hawa (north of Hebron, August 7), and Shavei Shomron (west of Nablus, August 9). The exact circumstance at each of these seven locations varies, as does the improvement in Palestinian movement. See reftels for additional information. END COMMENT.

WALLES